



# Socio-Emotional skills as a protective factor against school violence: A systematic review

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## Abstract

School violence is one of the most complex problems facing the Peruvian education system, affecting the well-being and holistic development of students. Over the past few years, various studies have demonstrated that socio-emotional skills equip victims with tools to cope with violence in educational settings. In this context, this study aims to analyze socio-emotional skills as a protective factor against school violence through a systematic review. Regarding the methods, a qualitative approach is used, employing documentary research within the systematic review and implementing the PRISMA protocols. The results of all the studies agree that socio-emotional or social skills function as a protective factor (shield, buffer) against violence, bullying, and risky behaviors. In conclusion, communication and school climate emerge as key mediating elements. Assertive communication between teachers and students, along with a positive school climate, fosters self-management and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

**Keywords:** Socio-Emotional, Violence, Skills, School, Protective.

## 1. Introduction

The human being is a social being that requires living in community; since civilization evolved, they have needed to connect with others. Feeling like part of a group and building one's own identity is the core of human relationships. Now, depending on the socio-emotional skills with others, it will guarantee not only the survival and full development of individuals, but also the transformation of communal spaces within cities such as factories, shopping centers, airports, educational centers, among others. For (Zarache, 2024), socio-emotional skills are a component of great importance in human development and influence various aspects of life, including achieving goals, social relationships, and decision-making. According to (Durán, et al., 2023), the term social skills was first studied in research on social performance in students at the University of Oxford; however, its origin is attributed to Andrew Salter, who addressed this term in his research.

According to (De Azua et al., 2020), these encompass a variety of skills, including effective communication, conflict resolution, empathy, and cooperation, which allow people to navigate social interactions and establish meaningful relationships. On the other hand, there are emotions, which together with social

skills are part of social interaction. Emotions, explains (Cedeño et al., 2022), are equivalent to a human feeling capable of being activated in different situations such as danger, threats, risks, among others. Thus being human mechanisms of reaction to certain circumstances, a reaction that may or may not be controllable by the human being. Now, if there is a population that is emotional, it is the one that is school-aged, particularly in adolescence; young people experience a series of neurological, hormonal, and psychosocial transformations that make them more reactive to emotions.

Adolescence is a transitional stage in the vital development of the subject, (Güemes & Ceñal, 2017) they leave childhood and seek their identity as a young person to become an adult. This transitional stage leaves the subject in a state of vulnerability in the face of various changes in all aspects of their life. Therefore, (Morlett, 2023) the inclusion of socio-emotional skills as part of educational training plans at basic and upper secondary levels under the scheme of a healthy lifestyle, takes on relevance in the new century, following research on phenomena such as violence and bullying, abuse, the increase in the number of unwanted pregnancies in adolescents, dropping out, gangs, among others. (Zych & Ortega, 2021) the number of studies on school and youth

violence has increased in recent years and their results highlight the important role of socio-emotional competencies when it comes to preventing or intervening in these behaviors.

One of the types of violence faced by students of all ages in educational institutions is precisely bullying (Masabanda & Gaibor, 2022), which involves the execution of violent actions within a context of interaction with others; these actions are aimed at harassing and devaluing others. (Bazaga, 2022) Bullying is a cross-cutting phenomenon that occurs in all countries where it has been studied and in practically all schools, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, social or economic situation. (Cedeño, 2021) The issue of school violence is so transcendental and important as a current phenomenon with such a high level of danger that even the United Nations has established guidelines and pronouncements in this regard.

For (Márquez, 2021) there are various types of bullying, including derogatory comments, social exclusion or isolation, as well as hitting, kicking, or pushing; likewise, there is bullying carried out through lies and rumors. According to (Fernández, 2022) to be called bullying, it must occur repeatedly over time. It also takes place in front of a group of bystanders who may remain silent or participate to a greater or lesser degree; and the aggression may be physical or verbal. As (Briones, 2020) points out, research suggests that bullying is a problem present every day and often has harmful effects on those who are bullied. Given this scenario, timely attention to the case is required; for this purpose, in the design of policies and laws to comprehensively address bullying, it must, according to (Shamrova et al., 2024), be subject to the child's participation in their community, where the school environment acts as a highly valuable protective resource that mitigates victimization.

Because unquestionably, to control bullying it is necessary for students to manage their emotions and identify the sources of violence within educational institutions. In this work, (González, 2023) the role of teachers as key agents in the prevention of school violence cannot be underestimated, nor can the participation of parents and caregivers in the prevention and management of school violence, since

(Biberos, 2023) learning to live together is one of the fundamental pillars of education; thus, it is important to prepare students to function in the interpersonal sphere, in an environment of respect and assertiveness.

In the school context, the lack of assertive social skills can manifest in forms of dysfunctional behaviors, such as bullying, social exclusion, lack of participation in group activities, among others. These behaviors not only negatively affect the educational experience of the students who suffer them, but can also create a negative school climate that affects the entire educational community. According to a study conducted by (Sacaca & Pilco, 2022), the results indicate that 35.9% of adolescents have a low category in social skills, 38.5% have an average category in the area of self-esteem; the areas of assertiveness and communication have 43.6%, 33.3% and 41.0% respectively. For (Echeverría & Paredes, 2025), the development of social skills in students, including assertiveness, is fundamental in the school stage, as it directly influences the quality of their social interactions and their behavior within the educational environment. Given this context, this research aims to analyze socio-emotional skills as a protective factor against school violence through a systematic review.

Socio-emotional skills were specifically selected because, according to studies conducted, findings were found that (Cedeño, 2025) strengthening socio-emotional skills in students constitutes an effective strategy to prevent and address bullying, as it improves emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict resolution. Furthermore, (Pérez, 2026) shows that students with a greater ability to identify and solve problems tend to handle conflict situations more effectively. On the other hand, according to (Estrada, 2022), it has been shown that the application of a psychoeducational program based on the social skills manual for school adolescents is effective in developing the level of social skills in adolescents. Based on this scenario, one might ask: How do socio-emotional skills influence the prevention and coping of school violence?

## Methods

The methodology followed has a qualitative

approach, and the type of research is documentary within a systematic review. For this study, the sample was selected using the parameters established by the systematic review defined by (Liberati et al., 2029) as a form of secondary research that uses explicit and systematic methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, where the PRISMA protocols were executed to select the study sample. The PRISMA protocols (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Protocols) and according to (Page et al., 2021) are a minimum set of evidence-based items for the development and reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses, in which it is important to represent the protocols in a flow diagram.

Based on these protocols, this study established the following phases:

### Search phase

In order to analyze the existing information on the topic of our interest, we posed the following research question: How do socio-emotional skills influence the prevention of school violence? The search formula used was: “school violence and socio-emotional competencies”. The search was conducted in the Scopus, Web of Science, and Scielo databases. The Boolean operator “OR” was used, and the keywords considered were “competencias”, “agresión escolar”, “bullying”, “Conflictos escolares”. A filter was applied regarding the year of publication (2014-2024) and the fields of study (Psychology, Education) in the databases that allow it. Records identified through databases (n = 1180)

### Screening phase

Once all records were identified, the objective was to perform a quick initial filter of the identified articles to eliminate those that were not relevant. Records

screened: the same 1180 original articles were evaluated. Records excluded: 1070

### Eligibility phase

This is the most rigorous stage of the selection. Here, the articles that passed the screening are evaluated in depth. They are meticulously analyzed to verify whether they meet all the inclusion and exclusion criteria of the systematic review. Full-text articles assessed for eligibility: 110 articles. Duplicates (n = 15), do not fit the topic (n = 18)

### Inclusion phase

Articles excluded: they do not provide sufficient data (n = 62). As a result, 15 studies were selected for the study.

### Results

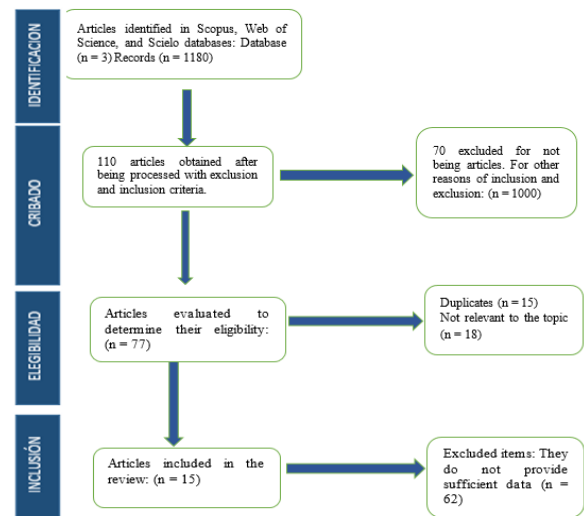


Figure 1. Flow diagram

Source: The search strategy based on preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses flow diagram

Table 1. Data extracted from the sample resulting from the execution of the PRISMA protocols

Nº	Referencia (Autor, Año)	Resumen de Resultados Principales	Resumen de Conclusiones
1	Gelvez (2024)	Un clima escolar positivo mejora la autogestión. Se identificaron programas que optimizan la resolución de conflictos.	Las CSE (conciencia, regulación y habilidades sociales) reducen la agresión y fortalecen el trabajo en equipo.
2	Lamo & Trujillo (2024)	Existe una necesidad crítica de incluir la comunicación no violenta en los	La comunicación asertiva docente-alumno fomenta la autonomía y el

		currículos de todos los niveles educativos.	espíritu crítico del alumnado.
3	Machado et al. (2024)	La resiliencia y autogestión predicen menos violencia. La presencia de mujeres en el aula tiende a mejorar la convivencia.	La cooperación y responsabilidad son factores protectores contra el bullying. Se requieren estrategias preventivas.
4	Alba & Molero (2023)	Los programas de intervención incrementan significativamente el autocontrol y el reconocimiento de emociones en adolescentes.	Las habilidades sociales moderan conductas de riesgo (drogas, violencia) y aumentan el bienestar personal.
5	Avivar et al. (2022)	Mejora significativa en respeto, responsabilidad y reducción de agresión tras aplicar programas educativos.	El desarrollo de la competencia social es una herramienta eficaz para prevenir la violencia interpersonal.
6	Rodríguez et al. (2021)	Mayor prevalencia de bullying tradicional que cyberbullying. Las niñas presentan niveles más altos de CSE.	La falta de habilidades sociales aumenta la probabilidad de ser víctima de acoso tanto online como offline.
7	Santamaria et al. (2021)	Es posible mejorar la gestión emocional y resolución de conflictos mediante programas específicos en primaria.	La promoción de CSE es fundamental para alcanzar la calidad educativa y la convivencia democrática.
8	Ricci & Santacruz (2021)	El déficit de habilidades sociales está directamente asociado a la participación en episodios de acoso escolar.	Proyectos antibullying deben priorizar el autocontrol y el aprendizaje cooperativo para mejorar el clima escolar.
9	Cedeño (2021)	El sistema educativo influye en el control emocional. Es vital vincular lo conceptual con lo emocional.	Sin procesos de educación emocional intencionales, los estudiantes no desarrollan relaciones interpersonales sanas.
10	Cueva (2021)	La escolaridad y el autocontrol influyen en la prevención de conductas infractoras y delictivas.	Un repertorio social adecuado permite al individuo interactuar de forma equilibrada con su entorno.
11	Risysky et al. (2019)	Programas extraescolares mejoraron significativamente la comunicación y relación con adultos y pares.	La recreación y actividades con propósito reducen el conflicto y la violencia entre estudiantes urbanos.
12	Silva (2019)	El grupo de intervención redujo la victimización por bullying más que el grupo de control a los 12 meses.	Las habilidades sociales empoderan a las víctimas y mejoran su calidad de vida en el entorno escolar.
13	Zich et al. (2018)	Agresores puntúan bajo en conciencia social y prosocialidad. No hubo diferencias marcadas en víctimas.	Las CSE actúan como escudo protector contra el bullying y cyberbullying en la adolescencia.
14	Ruvalcaba (2016)	Relación negativa entre seguridad comunitaria y conducta agresiva. Las CSE ayudan a la adaptación al contexto.	La práctica de CSE mejora el afrontamiento exitoso ante situaciones de riesgo y la interacción ambiente-persona.
15	Baquedano & Echevarría (2013)	Diferencias significativas en empatía y autonomía entre grupos. Los estereotipos de género influyen en la regulación.	El fortalecimiento socioafectivo es esencial para romper ciclos de pobreza y violencia familiar desde la escuela.

Source: Author's own work

**Universal protective effect:** All studies agree that socio-emotional skills or social skills function as a protective factor (shield, buffer) against violence, bullying, and risky behaviors.

**Specific mechanisms:** There is consensus that

certain competencies are the most effective in preventing violence:

**Self-control / regulation:** mentioned in studies 1, 4, 8, 10, and 14.

**Assertive / non-violent communication:** central in studies 2, 5, and 11.

**Conflict resolution:** key in studies 1, 7, and 11.

Empathy and social awareness: highlighted in studies 1, 4, 13, and 15.

**Need for intentional intervention:** the environment alone is not enough. Most agree that explicit (not spontaneous) programs or projects are required to teach these skills (studies 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12).

**Impact on specific roles:** several studies (6, 12, 13) conclude that a lack of social skills not only characterizes aggressors but also increases the vulnerability of victims, while empowering them with these skills protects them.

**Improvement of school climate:** implementing socio-emotional skills not only reduces violence but also improves democratic coexistence, teamwork, and overall educational quality (studies 1, 3, 7, 8).

### Differences (distinct approaches)

Although all point in the same direction, the studies differ in their focus and depth:

**Educational level:** some focus exclusively on primary education (5, 6, 7, 15) with an emphasis on early training, while others focus on secondary education / adolescents (1, 2, 10, 11, 13, 14), where violence is more heterogeneous (bullying, cyberbullying, delinquent behaviors).

**Type of violence:** while some study general school violence (1, 2, 11), others specialize in bullying and cyberbullying (3, 6, 8, 12, 13), differentiating between traditional and online harassment.

**Context and external factors:** studies 14 (at-risk environments) and 15 (poverty and family violence) add a layer of complexity by concluding that socio-emotional skills not only act within the school but also help break cycles of out-of-school violence (family / community). This is a key difference from those that focus only on the internal dynamics of the classroom.

**Gender approach: study 3 introduces a differentiating finding:** the presence of women in the classroom improves coexistence. Study 15 adds that gender stereotypes influence emotional regulation. This is not mentioned in the others.

**Methodology and duration: there** is a notable difference in evidence of effectiveness. Studies such as 5 (experimental) and 12 (quasi-experimental with 12-month follow-up) provide solid evidence that programs work over time, while descriptive studies (1, 9) remain at the level of correlation.

### Classification and thematic grouping of studies

**Group 1:** Effectiveness of programs and interventions (methodological approach)

These studies focus on how to implement and demonstrate that interventions work.

**Studies:** 5 (Avivar), 7 (Santamaria), 8 (Ricci & Santacruz), 12 (Silva).

**Common conclusion:** structured programs (in Physical Education, specific workshops, anti-bullying) are effective in improving social competence, reducing aggression, and empowering victims, especially when they focus on self-control and cooperative learning.

**Group 2:** Correlation between deficit in socio-emotional skills and victimization (risk-focused approach)

These studies focus on the direct relationship between the lack of skills and being a victim or aggressor.

**Studies:** 3 (Machado), 6 (Rodríguez), 10 (Cueva), 13 (Zich).

**Common conclusion:** there is an inverse relationship. The lower the level of social skills (resilience, self-management, prosociality), the higher the probability of participating in bullying behaviors (bullying, cyberbullying) or antisocial behaviors. Victims often lack an adequate social repertoire to defend themselves.

**Group 3:** Communication and school climate

(relational approach)

These studies highlight communication and the environment as central axes for prevention.

**Studies:** 1 (Gelvez), 2 (Lamo & Trujillo), 11 (Risysky), 14 (Ruvalcaba).

**Common conclusion:** Preventing violence involves building a positive school climate based on assertive communication (teacher-student) and purposeful recreation. Socio-emotional skills help adaptation to the context, improving self-management and relationships with adults and peers.

**Group 4:** Intentional emotional education and comprehensive training (pedagogical approach)

These studies argue that emotional education cannot be an addition but must be a pillar of the curriculum.

**Studies:** 4 (Alba & Molero), 9 (Cedeño), 15 (Baquedano & Echevarría).

**Common conclusion:** Without intentional emotional education processes, students do not develop healthy interpersonal relationships. Social skills moderate risky behaviors and increase personal well-being, making them essential for breaking cycles of poverty and family violence from within the school.

## Conclusion

The results of the systematic review show a unanimous consensus regarding the protective function of Socio-Emotional Skills (SES) against school violence. Four main thematic lines were identified in the conclusions of the analyzed studies:

The effectiveness of structured programs (Group 1) demonstrates that interventions based on self-control, cooperation, and the development of social competencies achieve significant reductions in aggression and victimization, with sustained effects over time (Avivar et al., 2022; Silva, 2019).

The deficit of skills as a risk factor (Group 2) is a constant, where low resilience, lack of prosociality, and poor self-management are directly associated with the roles of aggressor or victim in bullying and

cyberbullying dynamics (Machado et al., 2024; Rodríguez et al., 2021; Zich et al., 2018).

Communication and school climate (Group 3) emerge as key mediating elements. Assertive communication between teachers and students, together with a positive school climate, enhance self-management and peaceful conflict resolution (Gelvez, 2024; Lamo & Trujillo, 2024).

The need for intentional emotional education (Group 4) underlines that SES do not develop spontaneously; they require explicit curricular implementation that connects the conceptual with the emotional in order to prevent risky behaviors and improve interpersonal relationships (Alba & Molero, 2023; Cedeño, 2021).

The implementation of programs as spaces that favor the dissemination of experiences that strengthen social skills and also act as moderating factors for certain risk behaviors such as the use of psychoactive substances or peer violence requires the activation of various methodological resources that help students participate in recreational programs, thereby favoring interpersonal relationships with peers and adults who are part of these experiences.

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